

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 3, replace the paragraph, beginning on line 5, with the following amended paragraph:

--The DNA extraction can be conducted by conventional techniques using commercially available kits. The DNA fragments amplified in step (2) can span one or more non-overlapping genome regions, including genes and non-coding sequences, provided that the fragment length exceeds 100 bp (base pairs), preferably between 100 and 1000 bp, and more preferably between 100 and 500 bp. The fragments can be amplified separately or simultaneously; in the latter case, the amplification products should be distinguished one another by means of appropriate labelling. For example, the primer oligonucleotides or deoxynucleotide triphosphates used in the amplification reaction may carry detectable markers, such as fluorescent molecules (fluorochromes), preferably [[HEX]] HEX<sup>TM</sup> (Applied Biosystems), 6-FAM 6-FAM<sup>TM</sup> (Applied Biosystems) and TAMRA TAMRA<sup>TM</sup> (Applied Biosystems), or other molecules such as biotin, digoxigenin, fluorescein, rhodamine, Cy3, Cy5, 5-FAM ~~Ned, Vic and Pet~~ NED<sup>TM</sup>, VIC<sup>TM</sup> and PET<sup>TM</sup>. The markers are chemically linked to one or more nucleotides within or at the ends of the primer sequences, preferably on the first nucleotide residue, or to the deoxynucleotide triphosphates present in the PCR reaction mixture.--

Page 5, replace the paragraph, beginning on line 22, bridging pages 5 and 6, with the following amended paragraph:

--Approximately 4 g of stool were thawed at room temperature. DNA was extracted after a 15-min homogenization with 16 ml of TE-9 buffer pH 9 (0.5 M Tris-HCl, 20 mM EDTA and 10 mM NaCl) by ~~ULTRA-Turrax T25~~ ULTRA-TURRAX T25™ (Janke & Kunkel GmbH Co. KG IKA-Labortechnik, Staufen, Germany). After centrifugation at 5,000 g for 15 min, the supernatant was transferred to a tube containing 5 ml of 7.5 M ammonium acetate (M-Medical, Florence, Italy) and 30 ml of 100% ethanol (Carlo Erba, Milan, Italy). DNA was recovered by centrifugation at 5,000 g for 15 min at room temperature. Stool samples were suspended in 1.6 ml of ASL buffer and DNA was extracted using the QIAamp DNA Stool Kit (~~QIAGEN~~ QIAGEN™, Hilden, Germany).--

Page 6, replace the paragraph, beginning on line 5, with the following amended paragraph:

--Amplifications of exons 5-8 of p53 and fragments 1-4 of APC exon 15 were carried out on 2 µl of DNA from stool in a total volume of 25 µl containing 0.4 µM of each primer, 200 µM of deoxynucleotide triphosphates, 1x reaction buffer with 3.5 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub> and 1 unit of Taq polymerase (~~QIAGEN~~) (QIAGEN™). The reaction mixture was subjected to 32 cycles: 60s at 94°C and then 60s at 60 °C for p53 exons, and 58°C for APC fragments, followed by incubation at 72°C for 60s.--

Page 7, replace the tables as follows:

P53	Exons	Primer name	5'-labelling	Sequence
5	5-F	6-FAM- <sup>TM</sup>		ctcttctcgcagtactccccctgc
				gccccagctgctcaccatcgcta
6	6-F	HEX <sup>TM</sup>		gattgctcttaggtctggccctc
				ggccactgacaaccacccttaacc
7	7-F	6-FAM <sup>TM</sup>		gcgttgctctcctaggttggctctg
				caagtggctcctgacctggagtc
8	8-F	HEX <sup>TM</sup>		acctgatttccttactgcctctggc
				gtcctgcttgcttacctcgcttagt
APC	Fragment	Primer name	5'-labelling	Sequence
1	1BF	1BR	HEX <sup>TM</sup>	aactaccatccagcaacaga
				taatttggcataaggcatag
2	2F	2R	6-FAM <sup>TM</sup>	cagttgaactctggaaggca
				tgacacaaagactggcttac
3	3F	3R	HEX <sup>TM</sup>	gatgtaatcagacgacacag
				ggcaatcgaacgactctcaa
4	4F	4R	6-FAM <sup>TM</sup>	cagtgatcttccagatagcc
				aaatggctcatcgaggctca